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O R A T I O N

ON THE

Death of Abraham Lincoln.

ADDRESSED TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

BY DR. W. E. GUTHRIE.

PHILADELPHIA:
JOHN PENINGTON & SONS,
127 SOUTH SEVENTH STREET.

1865.







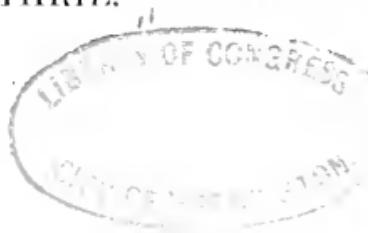
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NOTE.

This Oration, first delivered before the American Literary Union, on the 25th of April, has been sent to Secretary W. H. Seward, with the letter printed here as an introduction, on the 4th of May last, the day of the burial of President Abraham Lincoln, in Springfield.

A. M. R. 7 June, 1865, 192

INTRODUCTION.

LETTER.

PHILADELPHIA, May 4, 1865.

TO HON. W. H. S * * * * .

SIR: The accompanying address was written as a tribute to the memory of an honest man.

More dismayed than surprised at the news of the outrage, I felt that though born on a far land, and living in the shade, a stranger to that alluring activity which characterizes the American people, in sharing their perplexity and sufferings, I had identified myself with them, and that their hour of trial was also mine. These lines have then been written as a solace to the sentiment of deep sorrow under which the death of that innocent man had bowed me. Reading them in the intimacy of the fireside, I felt that, as imperfect as they may be, in them was perhaps something to console a few of those, who, in the bottom of their hearts, silently shed tears on the death of that just man.

You, his friend and counsellor, who have held the helm amidst that conflict of home and foreign interests, as well as jealous ambitions, all united to undermine and bring the downfall of a free government; whose first words after sharing as a victim in the tragical event, were: "For me, I care not—but they should have been more watchful for their President." Since it is not yet permitted you to speak on business, I hope I do not intrude upon your time in asking you to receive the offering of the enclosed manuscript, begging that, if its contents seem to you deserving, you

also send the second enclosed copy to the President, the chosen of the people, to whom is entrusted the realization of the work.

If in the reading of these lines of consolation they find their way to the heart; if a tear comes to moisten the eyelid, my ambition will be satisfied.

I conclude by uniting in sympathy with the satisfaction which the hope of your recovery, and that of your son, gives universally.

DR. W. E. G*****.

ORATION.

Americans! you have lost your great man! your honest man!!

Him who, rendering no worship either to gold or ambition, in the midst of destructive passions, of corruption, and the abuse of all earthly blessings, did remain pure, master of himself; his great heart always open to forgiveness; never judging hastily; always perfectly sober in all his acts, whether public or private.

Thought, emanating from that great soul, untarnished by any personal interest or prejudice, glowed upon his honest countenance, broke upon his lips in friendly words, in parables, never wounding even when it reproved.

You have lost your great man!

Him who possessed the true spirit of Christ, the spirit of the Gospel; that spirit which vivifies, which regenerates; that spirit which, without wounding, penetrates the soul of the sinner, and soon the sinner repents, feels himself renovated, open to new sentiments, and the miracle is performed!

In his youth, retired in the primeval forest, under those lofty trees, in the midst of that profound silence, his youthful soul had opened, had nurtured itself, had enlarged; silent, thoughtful, that sweet and living

music, the rustling of leaves mingled with the song of birds, came lightly murmuring like a soothing harmony, and charmed his senses without disturbing his thoughts. He seemed to perceive, through those green bowers which the rays of the sun were caressing, his nation, his people, his own, in the distant future, delivered of their chains, joyously entering the fields promised to a nation regenerated by liberty, equality, fraternity . . . by the word of Jesus. His mind embraced the multitude of children, innocent and beautiful, sporting and singing under those bowers which sift the light . . . But the wind rises, day disappears, lightning alone rends the dark clouds and spreads over nature, upon these once happy faces, the bloody rays of a sinister light.

Suddenly smitten, these proud giants of the forest, that have long disdained the crowd of young saplings, their equals, their brothers, are mastered by the tempest and the ambitious winds; and their impending downfall threatens with destruction all which is below them.

The man inclines his pensive, illumined brow, offering to God his humble prayer, he raises his arms, the axe describes a circle, the blow resounds, repeated in the echoes, mingled with the moanings of all sufferers in the plain. The haughty, in his disdain, smiles. The axe redoubles, its measured and patient blows excite the rage, the hissings of a thousand reptiles concealed amidst the roots. But the presumptuous falls at last! and the storm disappears, a pure sky covers again the forest, soon the wounds made in its fall will heal.

Reclined on that tree which a few moments before was a menacing giant, but which now lies expiring soon to disappear forever, the man wipes the sweat which runs from his brow, and his axe rests at his feet.

But soon retracing the space which his mind embraced, a revelation descends into that pensive soul: that profound silence of the forest, in which he loved to retire, it is the thought of humanity!

Those sweet songs, that soft harmony, those glades of a pure sky which his eye loves to find, to search through the verdant foliage, which a vivifying sun lightens, are the vistas of a promised land, the Kingdom of God on earth, where men renewed, freed from their chains, from their vices, will adore the God of mercy . . . in imitating Him!

That storm is the tempest of our passions, our vices and our crimes!

That tree with the haughty summit, is the brutal mastership of the tyrant, of the trader, of the slaveholder!

The woodman rises, his face beams with faith, he thrusts aside that axe now useless, and directs his steps toward the cities to study the springs which govern that great aggregate, which is decorated with the name of Republic. A new David, he marches to oppose his faith to the terrible armies of the enemies of God!

Weep! You have lost your great man!

You have lost him who, after having deeply studied the mechanism, as well as the object, of your societies, always enlightening, never imposing his opinions, in all his contests against those giants, your fetters, your

vices and your prejudices; to save your liberties, offered but the truth, innocently though tersely expressed, as a small round stone cast in their path, causing those false nobilities to stumble and fall.

You have lost him who thought that, if a severe justice may restrain crimes, rendering them more difficult and more rare, meekness and honesty alone penetrate hearts, melt to repentance, and, by inviting back to the path of duty, heal the disease itself.

You have lost him who, holding in his hand the power deposited in it by the people, never took a decision but when convinced, never sided with the strong against the feeble . . . though the feeble were his enemy.

Him who dared to be honest! And who yielded to the opinion, to the pressure of the mass, as much only as yielding would convert that mass itself to its best interests.

Him who dared to contend against you, that you might have time, by a riper and more sober thought, to cover yourselves with glory, in foregoing vengeance against your misguided brothers; when, had he obeyed your clamors, you would have dishonored yourselves, dipping your wrathful and revengeful hands in blood that need not be shed.

Weep! You have lost that great man whom circumstances had not altered!

Him who, to the summit of power had remained as simple as he was when a child, playing with his axe in the forest, under the shade of those mighty oaks!

Him of whom more than of any other among you

you may say : "Nihil humani a me alienum puto."* Nothing human was stranger to him !

You have lost him who, knowing the strength and root of the disease, despaired not nor doubted the triumph of good, him who, foreseeing the fate that might be his, has loved you, has kept himself before the Almighty, ready to give his life for his flock, and did seal his work with his blood.

Weep ! You have lost your great man ! your honest man ! your father ! Weep !

You had to lose him to know him !

The blood of martyrs is always fruitful ! May God permit that from that innocent blood may spring up the regeneration of the American people !

Let us descend into our souls and ask, which one of us will throw the first stone at guilt ?

Oh ! Americans ! come back to God ! Overthrow the altar of the golden calf ! that your rich shall be, no more, those who have the most usurped, but those who have found grace, laboring to the forthcoming of the Kingdom of God on earth.

* Terence

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